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Editor: Rev Professor J. C. McCullough
 Union Theological College
 26 College Green, Belfast BT7 1LN

Associate Editors: Rev. Professor Ernest Best
 13 Newmill Gdns
 St. Andrews KT16 8RY

Rev. Professor E.A. Russell
 Union Theological College
 26 College Green, Belfast BT7 1LN

Assistant Editors: Rev. K.D.W. Crowe
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Editorial Advisory Panel:

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EPHESIANS 4.28: THIEVES IN THE CHURCH

E.A.Best

It is first necessary to set this text within the ongoing argument of the epistle. After the initial address (1.1f) the author (he was probably not Paul, though if he was this would make no difference to the understanding of this text) in a eulogistic prayer (1.3-14) shows God's intention toward the world of his making; he is redeeming it through what he has done in Jesus Christ. The readers have been enlightened to understand this and Christ has been elevated to God's right hand (1.15-23). Previously the readers had been dead in sin, now saved by God's grace they sit with Christ in heaven (2.1-10). God's Jewish people would never have expected this to happen to the readers since the readers had not previously been Jews but Gentiles; now however they belong with Jewish Christians in the one church, God's temple, in which his Spirit dwells (2.11-22). In bringing this about Paul had had a double role as recipient of the instruction that Gentiles were to be received and as chief instrument in the carrying out of that instruction (3.1-13). The recognition of God's goodness in this leads the author to a final paean of praise (3.14-21).

Now that he has outlined the plan of God's salvation and shown his readers' place within it the author turns to the way they should live in the community God has created for them, and this occupies him to the end of the letter (4.1 - 6.20). Prior to turning to the details of behaviour he sketches the nature of the community of which they are members (4.1-16). It is the body of Christ, of which he is head. Its members have received spiritual gifts for the good of the community and they should use them to build up their fellow members. It is important to note that the author does not describe these gifts in terms of how they might be used to win others to the community or to ameliorate social conditions in the world outside. The body of Christ is looked at in terms of its inward life rather than as a body with a duty to those not belonging to it.

Before taking up the details of conduct the author again reminds his readers of the life they have left; once they lived in a world that was alienated from God; now they are new people (4.17-24) with a new type of existence. Outlining this new existence occupies him until almost at the close of the letter he reminds them of the spiritual help they may receive in what is essentially a contest with evil spiritual powers (6.10-18).

We return now to the beginning of the discussion of the details of conduct. In 4.15-29 the author sets down four parallel injunctions on speaking the truth, on not being angry, on not stealing and on speaking to others in such a way as to build up the community. Each injunction starts with a negative statement followed by one on the type of conduct required and ends

with a motivation. The first injunction sets the limits of the discussion. Believers are members of the same body, not humanity as a whole but the church, and so they should speak the truth to one another. We might have expected him to instruct believers to tell the truth whether they were dealing with non-Christians or Christians but what he writes is in line with what he said in discussing the nature of the church; his concern is with the inner relationship of its members rather than with their relation to the outside world. It is not that he advocates the abandonment of truth telling when dealing with non-Christians; for some reason of his own which he does not disclose he is not interested in detailing conduct toward unbelievers. This we shall see holds true also for the verse which is our main concern.

In v.28 the subject changes abruptly (there is no connecting particle) from not being angry to theft, though of course remaining within the area of obvious moral error. The plural of the preceding verses also changes to the masculine singular. In the previous exhortations the plural, though masculine, is to be taken as covering both sexes; here the singular cannot, and the masculine is appropriate since the exhortation goes on to argue that those who have stolen should instead earn money. This was something which women in most parts of the ancient world could not do.

While it is probable that lying (v.25) and anger (vv.26,27) were connected in some Jewish paraenesis (*Testament of Daniel* 1.3; 2.1; 3.5f; 4.6f; 5.1; 6.8) there is no reason to suppose that theft was also joined with them; its presence here may then either have been due to a connection with them in early Christian catechetical instruction or, more probably, our author for his own reasons has introduced the new subject. It would be certainly wrong to suppose a connection in thought between v.26 and v.28 as if the anger mentioned in v.26 came from Christians who were infuriated at fellow members who had been stealing and did not support the community.¹ Theft however appears in two of the lists of vices given in the N.T. (1 Cor 6.10; 1 Pet 4.15; cf *Didache* 3.5), and may have been more common than we would expect. While the lying of members (v.25) and their anger against one another (v.26f) would disturb communal living it is not implied that those who are accused of stealing stole from fellow members. On the other hand the new conduct required from thieves would bring positive benefit to the community, and it is this which may have served to tie in our verse with vv.25-7. As a sin theft differs from lying and anger in that probably only a few

¹ As G. Agnell, *Work, Toil and Sustenance* (Lund, 1976), p. 128, supposes.

members of the community would have committed it. Occasionally commentators (e.g. Hodge) express surprise at its inclusion as a sin to which Christians were open. Yet in some societies theft is endemic ('it fell off the back of a lorry', 'everyone does it'); indeed the sexual sins in which some of the Corinthian Christians indulged are in a way equally surprising for church members. The inclusion of theft as a possible sin in the exhortation gives us some information as to the kind of people who became Christians in the first century and reminds us how difficult they found it to break away from the ethical norms of the society from which they had been converted. Theft of course had been recognized in Judaism from the time of the Decalogue as a major sin (Isa 1.23; Jer 7.9; Lev 19.11; *Pseudo-Phocylides* 153ff; cf Strack-Billerbeck I, 810-3) and was also widely condemned in the Gentile world. This is probably why our author does not need to explain that stealing is wrong. Since our letter is a general letter directed not to one church but to a number it may for that reason give us a better insight into the kind of people who became Christians in the early days.

The present participle κλέπτων with the article is best taken as equivalent to a substantive, 'the thief', as denoting the person who becomes involved in stealing. It is not that these Christians were once thieves and have now given up the practice; if that were so the injunction would have been unnecessary. But thieving would have been a part of the life of some Christians before conversion and while it might go too far to say that then or now they lived by stealing it still formed a part of the way they lived. Slaves are hardly in view here (*pace* Hendriksen, Masson, Caird in their commentaries on Ephesians) for though they could steal, as Onesimus may have taken some of the property of Philemon with him when he ran away, they were not in a position to make this a common practice. Our author again is not thinking of theft as equivalent to careless work or slacking in a master's time; if he meant this he would have said so. Slaves moreover if they had been stealing were not in a position to give it up so as to devote their labour to earning and thereby to contribute to the welfare of the community. Their work was allotted to them by their owners who would have reaped whatever reward there was in it. The way slaves are to work is dealt with in 6.5-9. What is in view here are day labourers and men with some skill in a trade, perhaps even shopkeepers; all these could have mixed stealing with their normal occupations.² There were many day labourers whose work would

² cf M.I.Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (end edn. London, 1985) pp. 73-75, 107, 185f; C. Hezser, *Lohnmetaphorik und Arbeitswelt im Mt. 20: 1-16* (Freiburg and Göttingen, 1990), pp. 64-66.

have been in part seasonal because related to the market gardens which lay around cities and provided produce for them; others would have had to depend in other ways on the availability of work e.g. when ships were being unloaded in the docks or when master builders required additional labour for heavy and unskilled tasks (without much machinery there would be bursts of activity when many labourers would be needed); the work of skilled tradesmen could for similar reasons also have been seasonal. There were many ways in which shopkeepers could have stolen from their customers by cheating them (e.g. with false weights) though if this was what was in mind we would expect it to have been made clearer. When there was no work for day labourers and skilled tradesmen there was no money; there may have been public relief for the distressed in Rome but not for those in other parts of the Empire³ and Ephesians was not written to Roman Christians but to those in Asia Minor. Wages also were too low for capital to be built up as a reserve to cover periods of unemployment. Those without regular work may have been forced during periods of unemployment to steal to maintain themselves and their families.

Those who have been and are stealing are bidden instead to seek work. Work was highly valued among Jews as a normal human activity (Exod 20.9; Ps 104.23; Prov 6.6; 28.19; Eccles 7.15; *T. Issach* 5.3; Josephus, *c. Ap.* 2.291; the idle rich are denounced in passages like Amos 6.4-6). Jesus had a trade and teachers of the Law were generally expected to support themselves (*m. Abot* 2.2). Work was also highly valued in the Greco-Roman world (Epict 1.16.16f; 3.26.27f; 8.26.2f; Dio *Orat* 7.112f; 123f) though there in contrast to Judaism manual labour was often, but not invariably, regarded as inferior to work with the mind.⁴ That our author envisages those who stole with their hands rather than those engaged in financial swindling is indicated by the following exhortation which instructs them to work with their hands to relieve the needy. The energy and ingenuity devoted to theft would be better used in honest work. There is then an inner logic in the movement from theft to work. Our author does not mention restitution of what has been stolen, let alone the fourfold restoration offered by Zacchaeus to those he had cheated (cf Lk 19.1-10), nor does he demand repentance or threaten with eternal punishment those who disobey what he says. Here as with the other injunctions of 4.25-29 his attention is focused solely on the welfare of the

³ Finley, *op.cit.*, p.40.

⁴ cf. R.F.Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry*, Philadelphia, 1980, pp. 38ff, 44,45,48.

community. Paul had made a point of working to support himself during his missionary activity, presumably for the benefit of that activity (1 Th 2.9; 1 Cor 4.12), and so indirectly for the benefit of the churches he founded. The words of v.28 are very similar to those of Paul in 1 Cor 4.12; that passage may have been known to our author, or, more probably, since the contexts of the two passages are very different, the words may have been regarded as the true pattern for the behaviour of a missionary and then simply carried over to apply to ordinary life.

Although referring to work our verse provides no 'theology' of work for only the case of 'reformed' thieves is considered. The purpose of work has been evaluated in many different ways: it gives self-satisfaction through the act of creation, it enables people to get on in the world (the profit motive), it prevents revolution, those who work can remain independent of others (1 Th 2.9), a motive very like the Stoic idea of self-sufficiency (cf Phil 4.11), or gain respect from the outside world (1 Th 4.11f), or cease to be a burden on the community (2 Th 3.6ff). Some of these reasons would be more true of the modern than the ancient world for in the latter most work was dull and repetitive; it also required real effort and application as the word for working, *κοπιᾶν*, implies (Paul uses the root of his own work in 1 Cor 4.12; 2 Cor 6.5; 11.23,27; Gal 4.11; Phil 2.16). Many of these reasons for work (whether they are good or bad reasons is irrelevant) would hold true as much for unbelievers as for believers (4.22-4). A fresh motive has however been introduced here to apply to believers: the good of the community. In many ways it is a motive similar to the link Jews made between work and alms-giving (Agnell, op.cit, p.128; cf *T. Issach* 5.3; 7.5; *T. Zeb* 6.5f; *Pseudo-Phocylides* 22ff). In seeing the purpose of work as directed to benefitting (*χρεῖα* is used of physical need in Mk 2.25; Jn 13.29; Acts 2.45; 4.35; 20.34; Rom 12.13; Phil 2.25; 4.16) the community our author reflects the emphasis on the sharing of goods which we find among the early Jerusalem Christians (Acts 2.45; 4.32-5.11; 6.1ff) and which led to the collection made among Gentile churches for them (Rom 15.26f; Gal 2.10; 2 Cor 8.1ff; 9.1ff). Yet he does not lay the duty of sharing on the community as a whole but only on thieves within it. Sharing however probably forms the background to his injunction; it comes to the surface here because having begun by mentioning a vice, theft, he wishes to supply a good motivation for his readers; having started from theft as a way of life he needs to put something positive in its place.

While the total meaning is clear, the good of the community, τὸ

ἀγαθόν,⁵ has been understood in different ways. (a) The word may have been deliberately chosen to draw out the difference in moral value between what the thief could do now and what he has been doing, and should be taken adverbially, 'working honestly'. (b) It could be taken as the direct object of ἐργαζόμενος and refer to the product of the work (Agnell, op. cit., p.129); the carpenter, for example, if making a chair should make a good chair. (c) It could denote the objective of the work (cf Gal 6.10), 'doing what is good with one's own hands'. (b) reads too much into the word and at the same time is rather narrow (cf Lincoln in his commentary on Ephesians in the Word series); (c) is in the end very little different from (a), but (a) is to be preferred because of the contrast with the person's previous way of life.⁶

Among those whom our author envisages as his audience a few will have been wealthy and well-educated; he apparently does not look on them as potential thieves, though that gives us no reason to suppose that such people do not at times cheat others in their commercial and financial activities; even small shopkeepers may do so. Yet to tell these people not to thief but to work would not in fact help the needy since their cheating enabled them to make money; if they stopped cheating they would only have less to give to others! Ephesians refers to those who were not slaves and yet worked in one way or another with their hands, e.g. day labourers (see above). If they work they may bring in some income which can be used for the good of the less well off in the community; the general poverty of the ancient world meant that there were always some who were in real need. It could be argued that our author should have overlooked the sin of theft since those who gained money in this way might still have contributed to the poor; he knows however that theft is basically wrong and so cannot encourage among his readers a 'Robin Hood' attitude (stealing from the rich to benefit the poor).

More generally poverty was endemic in the ancient world; in an economy of scarcity anyone who does not work becomes a burden on others (2 Thess. 3.6ff). There was then a great need for all to share together and be

⁵ The order of the words of this final clause varies in the manuscripts but the meaning is not basically affected whatever order is chosen

⁶ W.D.Morris, 'Ephesians iv.28', *ExpT* 41 (1929/30), p.237, supposes a primitive corruption of the text which originally read τὸν ἄρτον; as with almost all 'primitive corruptions' there is little to be said for this.

liberal to one another (Rom. 12.13; 1 Tim. 6.18; *Didache* 4.6-8) and we can see the first Christians active in this respect (Acts 2.44; 4.32ff; Gal. 2.10; Phil. 2.14-20; 2 Cor. 8.1-5; 9.1-5; Rom 15.25-27; 1 Cor 16.1-3). The practical question of what was to happen to the thief and his family if he was no longer able to thieve to support them and could not obtain work is not discussed; the thief and his family instead of contributing to the financial needs of the community would then have been a drain on its resources.

When reading this injunction in Ephesians we have to imagine a situation very different from that of today's western world where there will almost always be some form of welfare relief for those without work. The wealth of the western world is such that there is no need for everyone to be in fulltime work and earning money in order for society as a whole to be prosperous; a considerable number of unemployed can be supported without causing an undue burden to fall on the remainder who are working. Again our author limits what he says to those who stole physically; theft cannot really be restricted in this way either in the ancient world or in ours; financial manipulation or the underpayment of employees can equally be forms of theft. We do not know the views of our author on these sins or on those who having made money in dishonest and/or wrong ways then give vast sums to charitable or religious causes. Consequently the simple statement of v.28 gives little guidance for today's complex financial and industrial set-up.

The most disturbing feature of v.28 however is not its failure to cover different forms of theft, but its limitation to criticism of conduct directed only towards fellow believers. In this limitation it is in line with the sharing of the early Jerusalemite Christians which was equally restricted to the community; Barnabas sold his farm and gave the money to the community (Acts 4.32-37; cf 5.1-6). Yet when the rich man came to Jesus to ask him what he should do to inherit eternal life Jesus told him to sell his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor; he did not tell him to bring the proceeds with him into the community of the disciples to be shared among them. In the light of this it is necessary to ask why our author is not interested in seeing the wider distribution of the money raised by those who ceased thieving and began to work. The problem here applies equally to his limitation of truth telling to fellow disciples (4.25) and to his general attitude throughout all his discussion of behaviour. Believers are told to be kind to and forgive one another i.e. fellow believers, and not to be kind and forgiving to all (4.32). Fornication is not to be named among them because it might cause a scandal to outsiders but because it is not fitting to mention it among the saints. Whereas in 1 Pet 2.18-25 slaves are instructed how to behave when attacked by non-Christian masters both the masters and slaves of 6.5-9 appear to be Christians and so their relationship is an inner community affair.

If we explore why Ephesians restricts itself to inner community behaviour we might answer that it is a general letter whose author probably did not know what was going on in each of the churches which his letter would eventually reach; it is then more difficult for him to speak of how Christians should behave towards outsiders for in this respect their circumstances would be very different while the inner life of their communities would be much the same. Yet one would still have expected him to indicate that lying was as grave an offence when non-Christians were deceived as when Christians were. He could also have suggested as does Paul (1 Thess. 4.12) that it is important for Christians to be seen to live quiet and orderly lives and so gain the respect of outsiders. It is however probably true that the community felt pressures from outside because its members were different (they did not worship idols, they had only one God and not many) and this drove them in on one another for mutual support; as a result their conduct towards one another became all important.

Our author could have written a different letter in which he set out clearly all the ways in which Christians should interact with non-Christians but he did not choose to do so and we cannot guess at what he would have written if this had been his objective. It is impossible for us to discover with any degree of completeness his reasons for the restricted view of conduct he adopts; we have to interpret the letter he has written and not another we might have liked him to write. Yet as we do so in the light of what we read elsewhere in the New Testament, and especially what we learn from the example of Jesus, we need to widen what he says so that those we teach do not think there is a different attitude for Christians to take up to non-Christians from that to other Christians.

E. Best

1 CORINTHIANS 15

Jeremy Moiser

1 Cor. 15 occupies a prime place in the Christian understanding of resurrection, both that of Christ and that of the Christian, and yet I do not believe its full significance has yet been understood. With this in mind I attempt here a dispassionate reading of this important text. By that I mean that I shall approach the text without any preconceptions derived from our knowledge of the gospel traditions, confident that in doing so we shall be placing ourselves to some extent in the position of Paul's first readers. In so far as we can reconstruct primitive Christian preaching¹, we can say that that preaching contained, of course, news of Christ's resurrection, but no details concerning the empty tomb, the first witnesses, the appearances. We can further be more or less certain that, at least ten years before the composition of Mk and thirty before that of Mt and Lk, no written material was available to the Corinthians of Paul's time².

Some commentators consider that, like 2 Cor, 1 Cor is an editorial amalgamation of several letters³. The main arguments are:

- a) there seems to be a contradiction between ch.8 and 10.23-11.1 on the one hand and 10.1-22 on the other;
- b) ch.13 interrupts the argument developed in 12 and 14;
- c) in ch.9 Paul seems to defend himself from attacks on his apostolic office; no such attacks are discernible in chs.1-4;
- d) in 1.10ff Paul seems familiar with the slogans of the various factions. 11.18ff, in which less familiarity is evident, would therefore seem to stem from an earlier situation;
- e) 4.19 and 16.5ff seem to be mutually contradictory.

As Friedrich Lang comments (*ibid*), the carving-up of a letter is necessary only when the text clearly indicates different situations, and the arguments in the case of 1 Cor are not such as to compel assent. On the other hand, the connexion of ch.15 with its surroundings is not so clear that it can be accepted uncritically. We therefore need to consider two hypotheses:

1. The present letter is substantially as Paul wrote it, and ch.15 is in its original place. (This is argued by Wolff⁴.) In this case, it is plausible to understand it as a pericope determined by two considerations. On the one hand, Paul wished to broach the main issue underlying the previously mentioned areas of dispute: marriage and virginity (7.1-40), food offered to idols (8-10), public worship (11) and spiritual gifts (12-14). He could equally

have reserved this discussion until after the next two items in the Corinthians' letter, the letter for the Jerusalem church (16.1-4) and Apollos' return to Corinth (16.12f). On the other hand, he wished to deal with misconceptions concerning resurrection, perhaps also mentioned in the Corinthians' letter at this point but not there introduced with the customary $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\ \delta\epsilon$. (According to Gerhard Sellin⁵, Paul's reasons here are 'rhetorical'.) His theme is therefore that only those whose behaviour is above reproach can hope to benefit from Christ's acquisition of glorious access to God. Resurrection is a reality, he affirms, and strong Christians are mistaken in thinking that agape is dispensable.

2 The original context of 1 Cor.15 is irrecoverable. In this case we have to rely on the material provided by the chapter itself in our efforts to reconstruct the situation. This second hypothesis would weaken but not destroy the reading we propose, since the latter requires the chapter to be understood primarily as paraenesis and not as doctrine.

The Situation

Do we need to determine the Corinthians' position(s) before we can understand Paul? Opinions are divided. Prof. Jean-Noël Aletti argues⁶ that since Paul counters their conclusion (there is no resurrection) and not their arguments, whether spiritualist or materialist, it is not necessary to know what they thought in order fully to understand the apostle's position and the profundity of his views. There is something in this, but perhaps we do not need to renounce so easily the attempt to discover what the Corinthians thought.

According to Schrage⁷, the Corinthians' position is not that of Sadducees converted to Christianity, nor that of enlightened sceptics, nor that of philosophising Platonists, nor that of people who deny all life beyond death, but that of people who deny bodily resurrection (and also perhaps future resurrection). Barrett⁸ argues skilfully (but I believe erroneously) that the Corinthians laboured under two errors: some accepted resurrection for Christ but not for others; others accepted resurrection but not in the body; Paul answers the first in vv.1-34, the second in vv.35ff. Lang too (p.232) opts for two Corinthian errors: a spiritualistic denial of bodily resurrection, and a Pharisaic belief that the earthly body would be resurrected as it stood. Klauck⁹ argues that the Corinthians believed in personal immortality on the basis of a Greek body-soul dualism. According to Sellin (p.17), there are

three main theories:

1. the people in question excluded all possibilities of salvation beyond death;
2. they denied the futurity of resurrection (a Christian had already risen in his or her lifetime);
3. they proposed a spiritual, non-bodily resurrection.

Only one of these theories, according to Sellin, is satisfactory: no.3. Paul's opponents were anthropological dualists who denied the body all redemptive relevance (pp.21-37). To initiate his discussion, Paul summons up a fictitious objection (in the style of a diatribe) from his dualistic opponents, which rests on a non-Pauline understanding of σῶμα: "The body is ephemeral. Resurrection, which by definition is somatic, is therefore excluded". The objection is falsely put because it presumes man has a body, not, as Paul does, that man is a body (pp.72f). Sellin concludes from an examination of the language (pp.79-209) that such theories have their original home in Alexandrian-Jewish wisdom theology. Those who denied resurrection at Corinth were therefore pneumatics of Alexandrian-Jewish provenance, perhaps led by Apollos.

Sellin has been too hasty in dismissing the first theory, in my opinion. As we shall see, Paul's argument can be summed up in two propositions: the dead can be raised from sheol; to be amongst those that are, one must be "in Christ". If these propositions contradict his opponents' views, the opponents thought either that there was no sheol, or that if there was, no one could leave it. These views are much more likely to be propounded by gentile than by Jewish Christians.

This view is strongly confirmed if 1 Cor.15 is taken to be an integral part of the letter. Some of the Corinthian community (or communities) who prided themselves on their new-found wisdom were causing dissension in the church (1.10-4.21), living immoral lives (5.1-13; 6.12-20), and despising the judgement of their fellow-Christians (6.1-11). Furthermore, they peddled erroneous views on the impact of the imminent End on the marriage tie, they saw no harm in eating meat that had reached the market-place or host's table via the pagan temples, they considered glossolalia the highest proof of their Spirit-possession, they objected to raising money for the Jewish-Christian church in Jerusalem, and finally they wanted the anti-Jewish Apollos sent back to Corinth to bolster their party. These are clearly the hallmarks of liberal gentiles.

On the question of resurrection, they seem to have believed that there was none, that is, that death was the end. This meant that Christianity was

reduced to a belief-system (a 'wisdom') offering an exhilarating freedom from restraint and the acquisition of impressive spiritual gifts, without responsibility towards the more scrupulous members of the community (Jewish Christians). Paul replies that their beliefs will exclude them through irresponsible behaviour from the greatest divine gift of all: agape, which remains firm even through death (13.13).

However, we anticipate. It is perhaps best to approach our reading of the text by offering a translation, using the twenty-sixth edition of Nestle as our Greek original. Explanatory headings are added to clarify the argument as I see it. The translation pretends not to solve all the difficulties in the text but to give the overall drift of Paul's argument. Some details of interpretation can be left undecided.

Translation of 1 Cor.15

Some of you say that since there is no resurrection or escape from sheol, Christian behaviour does not matter; they contradict our constant belief.

¹Now may I repeat, my friends, the gospel I preached to you, which you accepted, to which you now adhere, ²and through which you are saved? (if, that is, you stand by the word I preached to you, unless of course you were not committed in your belief).

³One of the first beliefs I shared with you, which I too had accepted, was that although "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures ⁴and was buried, he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, ⁵and that he was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve; ⁶afterwards he was seen once for all by over five hundred brethren", most of whom are still with us, although some have died. ⁷Afterwards he was seen by James, then by all the apostles; ⁸and lastly he was seen by me too, although I was as useless as a still-born child.

(⁹I am the least of the apostles, in fact unworthy to be called an apostle at all, because I persecuted the church of God, ¹⁰but by God's grace I am what I am, and his grace to me was not in vain, because I worked harder than all of them - not I, of course, but God's grace working with me.) ¹¹So whether you heard them or me, our preaching was the same, and you believed it at the time.

¹²Now if our preaching was that Christ had been raised from among the dead, how can some of you now say that there is no such thing as a resurrection of the dead? ¹³If there is no such thing as a resurrection of the dead, Christ was not raised, ¹⁴and if Christ was not raised, our preaching was false and your belief was false. ¹⁵We could even be called false witnesses of God because we testified that God raised Christ, which he could not have done if the dead cannot be raised. ¹⁶If the dead cannot be raised, Christ was not raised, ¹⁷and if Christ was not raised, your belief was worthless and you are still in your sins; ¹⁸and those who have died in Christ are lost! ¹⁹If in Christ we have put our hope in this life only, we are of all the most to be pitied. ²⁰As it is, however, Christ was raised from among the dead, the firstfruit of the dead, ²¹because although death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also came through a man. ²²Although all die in Adam, all will be made alive in Christ, ²³but in proper order: Christ the firstfruit, then at his parousia those who belong to Christ.

The Consummation

²⁴And that will be the End, when he hands the kingdom over to God the Father and abolishes all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵He must reign until he puts all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy death has been made powerless, for Christ has subjected everything under his feet. (²⁷When it says that all things have been subjected, it is clear that this does not include the subjecter, ²⁸but when all things have been subjected, the Son himself will be subjected to God who put all things under him, so that God may be all in all.)

How do Christians believe they achieve this resurrection? By living according to spiritual values!

²⁹What, may I ask, is the point of baptism, if Christians are to be eternally dead? If the dead are not raised, why bother to be baptised? ³⁰Why do we run hourly risks? ³¹I die every day. I say this because of my pride in you, my friends, in Christ Jesus our Lord. ³²If I fought with wild beasts in Ephesus, what worldly profit will it bring me? If the dead cannot be raised, let us eat and drink, because we shall be dead tomorrow (Is 22:13). ³³Do not be deceived: 'bad company corrupts good habits'. ³⁴Live just and sober lives, not sinful lives. I am ashamed to say that some of you show in your behaviour no knowledge of God.

**Surely, I hear you say, corruptible humans cannot be raised beyond death!
Of course they can - by God's power!**

³⁵Those of you of whom I am speaking will now ask, of course, how the Christian dead can be raised, and what sort of body they will have! ³⁶Foolish people, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies, ³⁷and what you sow is not the future body but a naked grain, as it were of wheat or some other crop. ³⁸God gives it whatever form he chooses, each seed is different. ³⁹Not all flesh is the same: humans have one kind, animals another, birds another and fish yet another. ⁴⁰There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but their glories are not the same. ⁴¹The glories of the sun and the moon and stars are not the same; stars too differ in their glory. ⁴²The same may be said of resurrection of the Christian dead. What is sown in corruption is raised in incorruption; ⁴³what is sown in dishonour is raised in glory; what is sown in weakness is raised in power. ⁴⁴What is sown as a natural body is raised as a spiritual body.

Those who will benefit from this transformation are those who have modelled themselves on the second Adam, Jesus Christ.

There is a natural body, but there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵Even though, as it has been written, 'The first man Adam became a living soul' (Gen.2.7), the *last* Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶The spiritual body, however, does not come immediately. The natural body comes first, then the spiritual body. ⁴⁷The first man was made from the earth, he was earthy; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸Earthy people are like the earthy man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man, ⁴⁹and just as we were once in the image of the earthy man, so we shall be in the image of the heavenly man. ⁵⁰Let me tell you this, my friends: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God! Corruption cannot inherit incorruption!

I can even tell you how the transformation will take place.

⁵¹I can now reveal that although we shall not all have died, we shall all be changed, ⁵²in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the moment of the final trumpet. The trumpet will sound, and the Christian dead will be raised incorruptible, and God will change us!

Conclusion: mend your ways!

⁵³So this corruptible life must put on incorruption, and this mortal life must

put on immortality,⁵⁴ and when what is corruptible has put on incorruption and what is mortal has put on immortality, then the words of scripture will be fulfilled: 'Death is devoured in victory' (Isa.26:8).⁵⁵ Where is your victory now, death? And where is your sting?' (Hos.13.14.).⁵⁶ Now the sting of death is sin, the power of sin is the law,⁵⁷ but we give thanks to God who makes us victorious in our Lord Jesus Christ.⁵⁸ So, my dear friends, be firm, be immovable, always abounding in the Lord's work, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not pointless.

* * *

Before considering some of the theological implications of the text re-read in this light, we need briefly to justify some of the translation, which might strike the reader as at the least unusual in parts.

- v.1 "May I repeat?" $\nu\omicron\omega\rho\acute{\iota}\zeta\omicron$ means make known or reveal, but in the context Paul is obviously not revealing something new, but repeating something already preached. This is widely recognised by commentators.
- "my friends": non-sexist translation of $\acute{\alpha}\delta\epsilon\lambda\phi\omicron\iota$! (also vv.31,50,58).
- v.2 "If you stand " etc. A very difficult phrase to tie in with the rest of the sentence. Findlay¹⁰ translates: "By what word did I preach it to you? - (you will remember) if you are holding (it) fast - unless you believed it heedlessly". For another alternative, see Schrage, pp.27f. For this understanding of $\epsilon\iota\kappa\eta$, see Thayer¹¹.
- v.3 $\epsilon\gamma\eta\gamma\epsilon\rho\tau\alpha\iota$. The Syr understands this to mean "from the beginning", ܥܕܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܥܬܐ . The Vulg "in primis", is, like the Greek, ambiguous. Perhaps one should in any case accept an inclusive sense.
- v.4 was raised, $\epsilon\gamma\eta\gamma\epsilon\rho\tau\alpha\iota$, lit. has been raised: the burial was once for all (aor.), the resurrection is permanent. Again most commentators point this out. "Was raised" seems more idiomatic here, however. Also vv.13f,16.
- vv.5ff "was seen", $\acute{\omega}\phi\theta\eta$, usually translated "appeared", which places the initiative with the risen Jesus. See the theological comments below.
- v.6 The exact extent of the quoted profession of faith is uncertain (details in Wolff, pp.153ff).
- "once for all", $\epsilon\phi\acute{\omicron}\pi\omicron\lambda\acute{\alpha}\xi$, not "at once", a meaning nowhere else attested in Paul - unless vv.6b-7 are traditional and not Pauline. The Syr translates "at the same time", ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܥܬܐ , and the Vulg "simul".
- v.12 "from among the dead", $\epsilon\kappa \nu\epsilon\kappa\rho\acute{\omega}\nu$. The use with the article in

vv.29,35,42,52 refers to Christians and is marked in the translation by the addition of "Christian". A more detailed discussion follows below.

v.15 "cannot be raised", οὐκ ἐγείρονται, lit. are not raised. Also v.16.,

v.18 "are lost", ἀπώλοντο, lit. were lost (aor.) when they died.

v.20 "As it is", νυνὶ. Its exact force is difficult to determine. Wordsworth¹² takes it to be a reference to the time of year when Paul was writing, ie Easter 57 CE. Others prefer a logical sense.

v.21 "through a man", δι' ἀνθρώπου, or through human means.

v.23 "at his parousia", ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ. Some older commentators understood this to mean "at his (first) advent", but the relevance of this is hard to see.

For a full discussion of the concept ἀπαρχή, the reader may consult Osten-Sacken¹³.

v.24 "That will be", εἴτα, lit. then, either after the parousia or (as in my translation) at the moment of the parousia.

v.26 Or "among these enemies death is made powerless last": ἔσχατος ἐχθρος καταργεῖται ὁ θάνατος is translated here according to the suggestion of A.Vanhoye (quoted by Carrez¹⁴). Wolff, p.181, prefers a combination of "eliminate" (ausschalten) and "annihilate" (vernichten). Robertson-Plummer¹⁵ offer "brought to nought" and "done away", and Moffatt¹⁶ "put down".

v.29 The translation of this notorious verse is justified in J.C.O'Neill's article¹⁷. I cannot agree with Aletti, pp.77f, that the different interpretations do not alter the logic of Paul's argument. Briefly O'Neill's argument is this. There are three substantial difficulties with regard to the usual translation (eg the RSV):

1 Vicarious baptism is nowhere attested and in any case seems theologically impossible;

2 ὅλος would more naturally go with νεκροὶ than with the verb, from which it is widely separated;

3 the textus difficilior, v.29c, would be that given in minuscule MS 69 and is preferable: ... βαπτίζονται ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν τῶν νεκρῶν. The verse begins to make sense if we take ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν in v.29b to mean "on behalf of (themselves as) corpses" (as in Chrysostom), ie some Corinthians were getting baptised against an imminent death. 'The whole verse', continues O'Neill, 'may then be paraphrased, "Otherwise what do those hope to achieve who are baptised for their dying bodies? If the completely dead are not raised, why then are they baptized for themselves as corpses?"'

'(p.311). In other words, some Corinthians were 'seeing in baptism a prophylactic against decay of the body: it would ensure their bodily resurrection. Wordsworth, p.139, gives an explanation in some respects similar.

v.32 Or "If as far as man is concerned (ie without divine interference), I fought with the wild beasts' etc.

"If the dead cannot be raised", occasionally understood as attached to v.32a.

v.34 ἄγνωστίαν γὰρ θεοῦ τινες ἔχουσιν πρὸς ἐντροπὴν ὑμῶν λαλῶ.

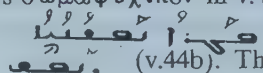
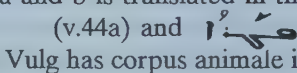
The context seems to demand a criticism of the Corinthians' *behaviour* rather than just of belief. See also B.Standaert in the discussion that followed Aletti's paper (apud de Lorenzi ¹⁸). I do not see how Barrett ¹⁹ justifies regarding vv.29-34 as a "digression".

v.35 seems to be continuing the dialogue and so refers to those mentioned in v.12.

v.38 Some commentators emphasise the adversative δὲ here: what you sow is not the future body, but God gives etc.


v.39 For some reason the Peschitta has used "body" (ⲛⲓⲙⲁ) to translate Paul's σὰρξ.

v.44 Paul's σῶμα ψυχικόν in v.44a and b is translated in the Syr as

 (v.44a) and  (v.44b). The Vulg has corpus animale in both cases.

Our own translation "natural" can therefore be substituted by "fleshly" or "animal".

v.45 "Even though", to translate the καὶ simply omitted in many English translations. The underlinings in my translation represent the emphatic positionings of the Greek: ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιῶν.

V.47 The Syr, normally very literal in its translation of the Greek, here adds  'The second man is the Lord from the heavens'.



v.48b Wolff, p.203, argues that the future rather than the present tense should be supplied.

v.49 The textual variant φορέσωμεν, 'let us be', might even be preferable here, but I do not insist on it. I am not quite sure why Barrett ('The significance', p.119) understands the Greek to be an inceptive aorist: We began to bear.

v.51 μυστήριον in Paul is an aspect of the gospel made known in these last times.

v.52 God will change us, ἀλλαγησόμεθα, divine passive.

v.55 Where Paul's Greek reads θάνατε ... θάνατε and the Vulg mors

... mors, the Syr has  (death) and  (sheol).

v.58 Klauck understands by 'the Lord's work' the Christian community, and by 'their labour' the work of catechesis and mission.

B. Theology

We now proceed to make a number of points about the theology of 1 Cor.15 before drawing the threads together at the end.

1. The chapter's **essential argument** is that if Christians are to rise as Christ did, their lives must exhibit the behaviour characteristic of Jesus. Because Christ rose to God, even though his body remained visible in the tomb, Christians will rise to God, although the presence among them of their deceased brethren's corpses apparently holds out no hope. This doctrine, says Paul, is an essential part of the Christian faith.

2. Paul does not indulge in speculation about resurrection for its own sake. (I say this against Robertson-Plummer, pp.328f, and others.) He is desperately concerned about divisions in the Corinthian community, caused by gentile Christians' throwing their weight around. The **ethical or practical function** of the chapter is demonstrated by the following features:

- 1) the introductory δὲ (15.1) is intended to link ch.15 with chs.12-14 and probably with chs.1-14, all of which, in one way or another, concern dissensions in the community.
- 2) Jesus' resurrection means that we are saved from our sins vv.17f.
- 3) Christian conduct is of value only if there is a resurrection, vv.30-33.
- 4) the Corinthians are urged to abandon their sinful ways, v.34, because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom, v.50.
- 5) they must abound in the Lord's work, confident that their labour is purposeful, v.58.

3. The **time-scale** is important. The chapter shifts between the past, the present and the future in a slightly haphazard and disconcerting manner ²⁰:

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| <u>past</u> | Christ was raised, vv.1-23 |
| <u>future</u> | an excursus: the victory will be finally manifested at the End, vv.24-28 |
| <u>present</u> | if there is resurrection, we must lead sober lives, vv.29-34 |
| <u>future</u> | the resurrection will depend on God's ability to transform, vv.35-44a |
| <u>present\future</u> | only those modelled now on the heavenly Man will inherit |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| | the Kingdom, vv.44b-50 |
| <u>future</u> | the resurrection will be God's work, vv.51-52 |
| <u>present</u> | the ultimate reward depends on Christian lives now, vv.53-58. |

A later writer might have clarified the time-sequence, but Paul was living in an age imbued with a vivid sense of the future's impingement on the present. If we can organise Paul's thought for him, he seems to have worked on the following time-scale. Christ's resurrection, which was always part of Christian kerygma, proves that resurrection of human beings is possible. If it is possible, who can hope to benefit from it? Those who live in Christ. Christ has already been raised, but Christians dead by the time of the parousia (plus those still alive at the parousia) will be raised to God. Non-Christians will presumably remain in sheol. Resurrection is a future event but one already begun in so far as Christ has already been raised and as people prepare themselves for it now.

4. Christ's resurrection proves that resurrection for humans is possible, vv.3-23. Further, Christ is the firstfruit of the Christian dead, vv.20,23. And thirdly, heavenly people are like the heavenly man, v.48. These three points demonstrate Paul's conviction that **Christ's resurrection is the pattern and power of ours**: what happened to Christ in the past will happen to those who die in him. As Schrage (p.23) says, in Paul's mind the resurrection of Christ and that of Christians go together. This Pauline thought, which occurs also in Rom.8.11; 1 Cor.6.14 and 2 Cor.4.14, is derived, according to Schrage, from traditional material²¹.

5. A crucial element in a proper understanding of 1 Cor.15, to my way of thinking, is Paul's clear distinction between **anarthrous νεκροὶ** and **οἱ νεκροὶ**, generally completely ignored by commentators, but even when adverted to, misunderstood. Winer, for example, cited by Wordsworth (p.13), supposes that the former refers to dead people as individuals and the latter to the dead as a group as distinguished from the living, but this is not borne out by Pauline usage. Müller²² is very dismissive of Jeremias' understanding (which I endorse), whereby anarthrous νεκροὶ refers to the dead in general and οἱ νεκροὶ to the Christian dead in particular. He comments: "Nothing indicates that 1 Cor.15 concerns the fate of the non-Christian dead" - that surely is *petitio principii* - and "furthermore, the phrase ἀνάστασις ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν does not occur in the New Testament. The phrase is always ἀνάστασις ἐκ νεκρῶν" - which does little credit to Prof.Müller's understanding of Paul's thought in 1 Cor.15. He concludes rhetorically: "How is it possible to understand that in v.32 all the

dead are meant, but in v.35 only the Christian dead?" I trust that the translation given above has made it intelligible.

It is unfortunate that neither the Vulgate nor the Peschitta preserves the distinction, partly because the lack of definite article in Latin and Syriac militates against it. (Other translations or periphrases would have been possible, in theory at least.) The Vulgate reads *resurrectio mortuorum* (and equivalents), while the Peschitta translates as **ܩܝܡܬܐ ܡܬܝܬܐ**. On the other hand the latter preserves better the flavour of the Greek phrase **καὶ νεκρῶν** by using **ܡܠܝܢ ܡܬܝܬܐ** where the Vulgate is satisfied with a *mortuis*. The following table illustrates the difference in 1 Cor.15:

νεκροὶ (trans. "the dead in general", all those in sheol)

- v.12 (Christ) has been raised from among the dead
How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?
13 If there is no resurrection of the dead ...
15 ... if the dead are not raised ...
16 If the dead are not raised ...
20 Christ has been raised from among the dead
21 Through a man (came) a resurrection of the dead.
29 If the dead are not raised...
32 If the dead are not raised...

οἱ νεκροὶ (trans."the Christian dead in particular", those who will rise from sheol)

- 29 What is the point of being baptised if one is eternally dead?
35 How are the dead raised?
42 So it is with the resurrection of the dead.
52 The dead will be raised incorruptible.

The distinction is observed in all other genuine Pauline letters. Thus of the sixteen occurrences of νεκροὶ in Rom, all are anarthrous but one: "God gives life to the (Christian) dead" (4.17). Similarly 2 Cor.1.9 (the only occurrence there with article): "That was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the (Christian) dead". Col.1.18 refers to Christ as the "first-born from among the (Christian) dead" (with article), and 1 Thess.4.16

speaks of "the (Christian) dead in Christ" who will rise first.

Anarthrous νεκροὶ refers to those in sheol from among whom the Christian just are raised. Thus Paul always refers to Christ's resurrection (cf Rom.1.4; Gal.1.1), but to those who are raised as οἱ νεκροὶ (eg Rom.4.17; 2 Cor.1.9; 1 Thess.4.16). There are two apparent exceptions. Col. 1.18 reads at first sight as if νεκροὶ ought to be anarthrous, but whether we read πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν or (with P⁴⁶ and Sinaiticus) πρωτότοκος ἐκ νεκρῶν the sense of the phrase is that Christ is the first of those who are to rise (cf Rom.8.29, "firstborn among many brothers"). The other apparent exception is 1 Thess.1.10, but some reputable MSS (Alexandrinus, the Ephrem Rescript and others) omit the article.

This convention is not always observed in the deutero-Paulines: Eph.5.14 is a case in point. This is in any case a quotation (untraced).

6. An ecumenical symposium on 1 Cor.15 was held in Rome at the Abbey of St.Paul-outside-the-Walls in 1983, and the Acta were published in 1985²³. The exposition of vv.35-58 was entrusted to Prof.Karlheinz Müller of Würzburg, and he argued against any *continuity between earthly and heavenly body*: there is a destruction of the old and a creation of the new *ex nihilo* (pp.171-255). In the discussion that followed his paper, Wilckens (ibid., p.268) and Cipriani (ibid., p.270) accepted this for both Christ and Christians. Wolff, p.195, is of the same opinion independently.

- Sellin too (pp.210-223) understands Paul in this way. Paul was opposing a dualism which undervalued the body. For him, post-mortem existence was spiritual and bodily. v.36 makes it clear that the new σῶμα(of the plant) is a new creation. The point is precisely that there is no continuity from the existence as "seed" to the existence as "plant". Between the two comes death (as in the Christological kerygma of vv.3ff). The transformation after death is by God (v.38). Paul thus regarded death, according to Sellin, as an annihilation. The thought of a continuous identical subject not only is absent from Paul but is here sabotaged. There is no kernel of man which might guarantee continuity. "As Christ died and was raised, so are Christians" (p.215). Without death there can be no new creation. Without death Christ's resurrection would not be the opening-up of new life. Paul uses the category of new creation at two levels: for the believer's present change of existence brought about by dying with Christ in baptism, and for future bodily resurrection.

It is astonishing that neither Müller nor Sellin seems to have understood the implications of what they are saying. If Christ's risen body was a new creation, then what the disciples "saw" was not the crucified and buried body. That, presumably, was still in the tomb: God would hardly go to the trouble of destroying it instantaneously, especially as the bodies of deceased Christians are allowed to decay.

Now I happen to think that Müller and Sellin are intemperate in their formulation of Paul's thought. "Destruction and new creation" (Sellin), seem to me not to respect the text: "σπείρεται ... ἐγείρεται, what is sown ... is raised" (vv.42f.) There is a continuity as well as discontinuity, and Gillmann is more accurate in his analysis²⁴. He draws attention to five images:

1. The seed is sown, and the result is new life, vv.36-38;
2. Similarly, life comes from death: the imperishable from the perishable, v.42b, glory from dishonour, v.43a, power from weakness, v.43b, spiritual body from physical body, v.44a. Paul expatiates on this with further metaphors:
3. we take on a change of image, v.49;
4. we are transformed and so inherit the kingdom of God, v.50;
5. we put on a change of clothing, v.53.

Now each of these images balances continuity and discontinuity:

- A. 1) death is the end of a person's earthly existence in all its aspects;
2) the heavenly body is utterly different from the physical body.
- B. 1) God provides a new body for the deceased Christian;
2) it is the same person who lives, dies and puts on immortality.

We might also mention that from a different angle, that of dogmatic theology, G.Nossent²⁵ accuses the Müller-Sellin view of essentialism: "What would eventually ensure the identity of the person who is annihilated and then re-created could only be the eternal idea of his essence...but would not a more coherent existential philosophy acknowledge that this suggested re-creation is in fact a substitution of subjects? It would no longer be I but another, since I would have disappeared".

This modification of Müller and Sellin does not, however, destroy their central contention, which I believe we should accept, viz.that Jesus' physical body is irrelevant to the resurrection event. On Paul's own theology it cannot be the locus of a dominical presence or the vehicle of a heavenly exaltation.

7. Does Paul know of the **empty tomb tradition**? Some writers argue that he does. Dhanis²⁶, for example, takes the four articles of the confession in vv.3-5 and makes two comments:

1. they "were sure to" ("durent") have been commented on in Paul's teaching, and such commentary "was sure to" ("devait") have included a narrative (death, burial, appearances).
2. the commentary on the third article (resurrection) "probably" consisted of a mention of the empty tomb.

Now Dhanis is embarrassed by the fact that in itself the text of 1 Cor gives no evidence for his conclusion, and he is therefore forced to adduce the synoptic material - a legitimate step, he argues, in view of "the bond which connects it in a general way with the primitive catechesis". The reader may also consult Martini²⁷, who argues that the empty tomb is presumed not only in 1.Cor.15.4 but also in Acts 10.40 and 13.29.

Against W.Marxsen, Hempelmann²⁸ maintains that the priority of 1 Cor.15.3ff over the more elaborate gospel stories is questionable:

1. it begs the question by neglecting the historical credibility of the gospel accounts;
2. it presumes that the longer is always an overworking of the shorter; the reverse is frequently true;
3. one may not properly compare a brief credal formula and an extended narrative;
4. the gospel tradition knows of material foreign to the Pauline tradition (eg the Emmaus appearance) which cannot plausibly be derived from 1 Cor.15.3ff;
5. the date of a source is no indication of the date of its content; the gospels could contain information as old as and more reliable than 1 Cor.

Now I venture to suggest that without looking for a reference to the empty tomb on the basis of the gospel material, one would never suspect Paul of knowing it. The text of 1 Cor itself gives no hint of such a tradition, even by implication, and commentators look for it on external grounds only. A dispassionate reading of

1 Cor.15.3ff, in the light of the rest of the chapter, leads to the conclusion not only that Paul knew of no empty tomb but rather that his entire thesis is based on the contrary supposition.

8.How reliable is Paul's view of the historical fact (as he supposed) of the full tomb? In general **Paul's knowledge of Jesus' history** was sound. Bornkamm²⁹

shows that his relation of history is preferable to Luke's, and two essays in the 1984 symposium on *The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels* show a substantial knowledge of dominical logia and deeds in Paul³⁰. In brief, Wenham's argument is as follows. He takes three samples: 1 Cor.7.10f (Paul knew of Jesus' divorce saying, the 'let not man put asunder' saying, and the whole block of tradition found in Mk.10/Mt.19, including the M tradition concerning eunuchs); Rom.12 (Paul knew of the primitive tradition behind Mt.5.38-48/Lk.6.27-36 on not retaliating); and Gal.1-2 (Paul knew of Peter's primacy, cf Mt.16.17-19). This material, together with that studied in Wenham's previous book on *The Rediscovery of Jesus' Eschatological Discourse*³¹, demonstrates that Paul was familiar with a wide variety of gospel material that occurs later in Q,M,L and Mk. It includes sections of the Sermon on the Mount, the mission discourse, the divorce pericope, the eschatological discourse and the passion narrative.

Whether Paul quotes explicitly, freely or implicitly, the Jesus tradition was evidently authoritative for himself and his readers. That he is less formal in his use of the material is explicable on the premise that while he can take it for granted most of the time, the evangelists were trying to preserve and transmit it, only secondarily to interpret or apply it. Richardson and Gooch³² conclude that Paul was familiar with a number of traditions of Jesus' teaching: on divorce, the mission charge, on the faith that moves mountains, the wise builder and so on.

It is therefore a perfectly scholarly deduction that Paul's supposition of a full tomb as the positive basis of his thoughts on bodily resurrection is primitive, authentic and reliable. This would of course have important implications for an examination of the gospel accounts.

The Resurrection of Jesus in 1 Cor.15

We are now in a position to extract Paul's view of the mechanics of Christ's resurrection. The main thrust of the chapter is an exhortation to live Christian lives on the grounds that resurrection is available only to those who die in Christ. Christ is upheld as the model, pattern or firstfruit; whatever happened to him will happen to Christians. Thus he died and was buried; Christians die and are buried. He was raised from sheol; Christians will be raised from sheol. He was taken to God; Christians will be taken to God. Jesus' resurrection is therefore metahistorical and metempiric. It is accessible only to those with faith, which Paul also expresses by including it in the kerygma.

The only distinction between Jesus and Christians is temporal: Jesus has already been raised, because otherwise the last enemy, death, would not have been conquered. His being released from sheol is the ground of our hope. We, on the other hand, shall not be raised until the final trumpet; until that glorious moment, the Christian dead remain in sheol with the non-Christian dead. Paul accepted this distinction from traditional understandings of the Last Day³³.

Paul's spatial scheme is conditioned by the world-understanding of the Judaism of his time³⁴. Sheol was beneath the flat world. Heaven was above the sky. Resurrection was literally an ascension from below the earth to above the skies, and only God could so raise people. How far this scheme mars the appropriation of Paul's theology in our time is for the reader to decide. As I see it, we could dispense with sheol and still leave his essential vision intact.

Now if Paul's essential vision concerns Jesus' metahistorical journey to the Father in defiance of and through or beyond death, any idea of Jesus' returning to this life at any stage would be irrelevant and contradictory. If he rebounded from death or went through death only to reappear in earthly life afterwards, what sort of example for us could he have offered? An empty tomb and physical appearances accessible to history could only encourage the Christian to believe that Christ's resurrection was unique, whereas for Paul it is the very blueprint of Christian resurrection. Christian behaviour has post-mortem consequences. If Christ did not break out of death and ascend to God in his heaven, we are still in our sins, trapped in sheol, to which all those not in Christ are doomed for ever.

Bearing these ideas in mind, we can confront the appearances listed in vv.5ff. A physically accessible return of Jesus to this life would sabotage his entire argument, so Paul can mean only a spiritual vision. How then are we to understand the language of the credal formula which Paul borrows and extends in vv.3b-5 + 6-8? Lohse is right, in my opinion, when he maintains³⁵ that for Paul the resurrection/exaltation of Jesus, unlike his death which was a "historical piece of news", was the subject of belief (eg Rom.4.24) and confession (eg Rom.10.9). It always involved belief in the God who raises the dead (Rom.4.17 etc), a phrase with unmistakable Jewish overtones. Paul saw two corroborations of the resurrection in the scriptures and in the testimony of witnesses to whom the risen Lord had appeared. These appearances, argues Lohse, are not like historical sightings, because if Jesus' resurrection were the reanimation of a corpse, it would be accessible to history, and it

would not be a defeat of death (since the person would still be subject to mortality). Jesus' resurrection cannot be an object of proof or denial. 'Our eyes see the cross, but our ears hear the word: Christ is risen' (p.60). To believe in the risen Christ is to accept him as Lord.

Lohse's view is confirmed by some other considerations:

1. The "third day" is surely a **theological** rather than a historical datum (Moffat, p.237; Gutwenger³⁶; Klauck, p.109; an opposite view is argued by, among others, Wolff, pp.162-165).
2. The word $\omega\phi\theta\eta$ is part of theophanic convention (Klauck, p.109; Lang, p.212) and not to be taken as a synonym of $\beta\lambda\acute{\eta}\pi\omega$ or $\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\acute{\epsilon}\omega$. Although he is more cautious than I think is necessary, Schrage, p.33, acknowledges that $\omega\phi\theta\eta$ "emphasises the inner perception". Weatherhead³⁷, quoting F.W.Moyle (1928), expresses the difference by saying that $\beta\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\pi\omega$ and $\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ mean seeing with the optic nerves, while $\delta\rho\acute{\alpha}\omega$ indicates mental insight or spiritual vision. For the various possibilities of translating $\omega\phi\theta\eta$, see Wolff, pp.165ff and Klauck, p.109.
3. And finally, Paul interprets his Damascus road experience as on a par with the Easter experiences of Peter and the other witnesses. In the Acts 9 account, Paul's companions hear the divine voice but see nothing, and in the Acts 22 account they hear nothing but see a light. Even Paul himself is not said to have seen anything but a bright light (*vide* Schillebeeckx³⁸ for a wider discussion). In other words, what we are dealing with is not a historical sighting but an inner conversion experience, with difficulty translatable into words intelligible to others.

Hempelmann argues (pp.13ff) that the disciples' Easter faith is inexplicable, in view of the disgrace and degradation associated with crucifixion, except on the premise that Jesus appeared to them physically after his death. I should prefer to say that, as with Paul and his conversion, it dawned on them that Jesus was the messiah and that the Old Testament prophecies applied to him. The Easter faith of those who were already sympathetic to Jesus and that of those like Paul and James who were not, are similar in that both groups needed to be convinced of the true nature of Jesus' messiahship. One cannot play one off against the other, as Hempelmann does (pp.62-66). Now conversion is always an act of divine mercy; no preliminary meritorious act or state of mind is required of the believer. What therefore changed the disciples from cowards, and Paul from a persecutor, to brave preachers was a conversion experience which is only metaphorically translated as an

appearance of the risen Lord.

Finally, I am not saying that the Pauline view of Jesus' resurrection is the only one or that where Christians today disagree with it they are in error or confused. I have simply wished to show that Paul's view is not that generally supposed.*

NOTES

1. Cf the classic *The Apostolic Preaching* by C.H Dodd (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936, 1966), pp.7-35; E.E.Lemico, 'The Unifying Kerygma of the New Testament', *JSN* 33 (1988), pp.3-17.
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3. Details in F.Lang, *Die Briefe an die Korinther* (Das Neue Testament Deutsch,7; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1986), pp.6f.
4. C.Wolff, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther. Zweiter Teil* (Theol.Handkomment.zum NT,7/II; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1980,1982²),pp.147-149.
5. G.Sellin, *Der Streit um die Auferstehung der Toten. Eine religionsgeschichtliche und exegetische Untersuchung von 1.Korinther 15* (Göttingen:Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1986), p.16.
6. J.-N.Aletti, 'L'argumentation de Paul et la position des Corinthiens. 1 Co 15,12-34', in L.De Lorenzi (ed.), *Résurrection du Christ et des Chrétiens* (1 Co 15) (Rome: Abbaye de S.Paul hors-les-murs, 1985), pp.63-81.
7. W.Schrage, '1.Korinther 15, 1-11', in L.De Lorenzi (see note 6 above), pp.21-45.
8. C.K.Barrett, 'The significance of the Adam-Christ typology for the Resurrection of the dead: 1 Co 15,20-22.45-49', in L.De Lorenzi (see note 6 above), pp.99-122.
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10. G.G.Findlay, 'St Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians', in W.Robertson Nicoll (ed.), *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990), Vol.II,pp.729-953.
11. J.H.Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. and T.Clark, 1862,1901⁴,1914), *sub voce*.
12. C.Wordsworth, *The New Testament of our Lord Saviour Jesus Christ in the Original Greek, with Introduction and Notes* (London: Rivingtons,1877, 2 vols) II, pp.73-144.
13. P.v.d.Osten-Sacken, 'Die paulinische *theologia crucis* als Form

apokalyptischer Theologie', *EvangTheol* 39 (1979), pp.477-496.

14. M.Carrez, 'Résurrection et Seigneurie du Christ: 1 Co 15,23-28', in L. De Lorenzi (see note 6 above), pp.127-140.

15. A.Robertson-A.Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians* (The International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T.& T.Clark, 1911, 1914², 1955), p.356.

16. J.Moffatt, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (The Moffatt New Testament Commentary; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938, 1954), p.246.

17. J.C.O'Neill, '1 Corinthians 15:29', *ExT* (1979\80), pp.310-311.

18. B.Standaert in L.De Lorenzi (note 6 above), p.95.

19. C.K.Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London: 1968, 1971²), p.369.

20. H.Berkhof, *Christ the Meaning of History* (London: SCM, 1966), p.182: 'It is sometimes difficult (especially in 1 Cor 15) to say where the boundaries are because the consummation is simply presented as the continuation of history'.

21. Loc.cit (note 7 above). Cf.J.Daniélou, *La Résurrection* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), p.66.

22. K.Müller, 'Die Leiblichkeit des Heils 1 Kor 15, 35-58', in L.De Lorenzi (see note 6 above), pp.171-255, at pp.206f, note 120.

23. Under the editorship of L.De Lorenzi: see note 6 above.

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27. C.M.Martini, 'La testimonianza dei primi cristiani per la risurrezione di Gesù', *CivCatt* 2930 (15 July 1972), pp.125-135.

28. H.Hempelmann, *Die Auferstehung Jesu Christ - eine historische Tatsache? Eine engagierte Analyse* (Wuppertal: R.Brockhaus, 1982). Cf J.Wenham, *Easter Enigma. Do the Resurrection Stories contradict one another?* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1984); A.T.Nikolainen, *Der Auferstehungsglauben in der Bibel und ihrer Umwelt. II. Neutestamentlicher Teil* (Helsinki: Finnische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1946), pp.137-206.

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32. See note 30 above.
33. 'For Paul (as an ex-Pharisee) resurrection from the dead is an eschatological event', Wolff, p.173.
34. Cf. W.Mass, '„Abstiegen zur Hölle" : Aspekte eines vergessenen Glaubensartikels', *Internat.kath.Zeitschr.Communitio* 10\1 (1981), pp.1-18; H.Gollinger, '„Wenn einer stirbt, lebt er dann wieder auf?" (Ijob 14,14)', in L.Oberlinner (ed.), *Auferstehung Jesu - Auferstehung der Christen* (FS Vögtle; Freiburg-Basel-Vienna: Herder, 1986), pp.11-38; L.Ramaroson, 'Immortalité et résurrection dans les psaumes', *ScEsp* 36 (1984), pp.287-295.
35. E.Lohse, 'Was es heißt: Ich glaube an den auferstandenen Christus. Vom Zentrum einer Theologie des Neuen Testaments', *BerlTheolZeitschr* 4 (1987), pp.53-67.
36. E.Gutwenger, 'Auferstehung und Auferstehungsleib Jesu', *ZKTh* 91 (1969), pp.32-58.
37. L.Weatherhead, *The resurrection of Christ* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1959), p.50. Cf. also the discussion in C.A.Perry, *The Resurrection Promise* (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Eerdmans, 1986), pp.10-19.
38. E.Schillebeeckx, *Jesus. An experiment in Christology* (London: Collins, 1979), pp.360-379.

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Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989.

Magic in the New Testament is an embarrassing subject for many in the Christian churches today. Scholars tend to regard its presence in scripture as a relic of scripture's own pre-critical world view - about which self-respecting modern biblical critics prefer to say as little as possible. Even those of us who would not wish to embrace a full blown vision of Bultmannian demythologization of the New Testament, find descriptions of demons or magical activity a mystery tour on which we would rather not travel.

There are of course those in the church - on the whole from outside the realms of academe - who would prefer to shy away from the subject of magic not because they regard it as *passe*, but rather because they consider it to be prevalent and presently powerful in our world. The demonic is intrinsically dangerous and must not be studied even by those who claim that their interest is scholarly or merely intellectual.

Susan Garrett's book begins by considering these two opposing viewpoints - and then proceeds to knock them both on the head. In the world of the New Testament magic was not just an optional extra, conjuring tricks brought out during a festive season, but an everyday part of life - for many it was only magic that could make life livable. The magical papyri, which Garrett draws upon in the explorations of her thesis, witness to the ways in which magical formulae were used to control divine or demonic forces by people who otherwise felt themselves to be powerless pawns in a Graeco-Roman political megalith. Jewish texts also refer to magic and magicians, although fairly consistently linking them to false prophets and to Satan. One of the useful features of Garrett's work is her discussion of Jewish pseudepigraphical texts which touch on this area. She takes issue with the conclusions of those such as John M. Hull: *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* who tend to regard any interest by the gospel writers in magical phenomena as evidence for the ways in which the synoptic tradition has been influenced by hellenistic thought and ideas. Her central thesis is that victory over magicians and all their works is a visible sign for the evangelists, and in particular St. Luke, of the defeat of Satan which has been proclaimed in and through the ministry of Christ. During the lifetime of Jesus, the struggle with Satan which began so strongly at the time of the temptations is not yet concluded. Although Jesus while still in Galilee has seen Satan fall from heaven (Luke 10:18), the final defeat of the devil will not take place until Jesus himself is raised to heaven after the resurrection. So the stories of apostolic conflicts with magicians - with Simon Magus (Acts 8), with Bar Jesus (Acts 13) and the seven sons of Sceva (Acts 19) show that Satan's Kingdom is splintering and fizzling into extinction. It is a powerfully and convincingly presented thesis. I am sure that

she has done us a service in drawing to our attention some Old Testament texts (eg., Isaiah 14, Psalm 91) to which she refers. Both Isaiah 14 and Psalm 91 have been too little studied by New Testament exegetes.

Garrett focuses her attention, as the title of her book suggests, on the Lukan writings, both the Gospels and Acts. I was surprised that she does not seem to refer to Ernest Best, *The Temptation and the Passion in Mark*. Best's thesis in that book is actually fairly similar to that of Garrett, though naturally he does not extend his scope into the period of the early church. Comparing the two books in my own mind led me to reflect on why and how it is the Lukan writings (rather than say Matthew or John) which lend themselves to being examined from this perspective. I suspect that the particularly Lukan concern for and interest in the wider world in which Christianity is to be met may have something to do with it. Although it would be a mistake to suggest that Luke regarded the Roman realm purely as an 'evil empire', nevertheless it provides a kind of counter-balance or contrasting shadow to the kingdom of God. It is sufficiently physical and tangible to act as a stage on which the kingdom of Satan can be seen to crumble. There are some fascinating hints in Garrett's book, which I would like to explore further, that Satan's domain and Pharaoh's overlap: in both, of course, magicians play a significant role (see exodus 8) and in both 'the finger of god' (Luke 11:20, Exodus 8:19) is the power that produces radical change.

Although it takes a little time to get into the book, Susan Garrett writes well and with a freshness that makes even the more jaded of New Testament students feel that she has something new and exciting to share. If being left with queries that one wishes to pursue further is a mark of a scholarly job well done (and I think it is!) then Garrett deserves our thanks - and an acknowledgement that the New Testament's interest in the magical is not just an excursus irrelevant to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Clare Amos
Canterbury.

